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FOR POLAD; DHS FOR CIS-CARLOS ITURREGUI

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SUBJECT: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: VISITING OAS SYG INSULZA  
PROMOTES DEMOCRACY, AID TO HAITI

REF: SANTO DOMINGO 0841 (NOTAL)

11. Summary: OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza, in a visit to the Dominican Republic March 5-6, met with President Fernandez and Foreign Minister Carlos Morales Troncoso, spoke at the opening events of the 23d Model OAS (March 5) and the Regional Forum on Modernization of Legislatures and Political Parties (March 6), and held a press conference. Insulza and Fernandez addressed the need for reforms to strengthen democratic institutions and rule of law in the hemisphere to give citizens more confidence in their democracies, and Insulza called for more rapid disbursement of international aid to Haiti and continuing MINUSTAH deployment. There was also a panel discussion of OAS headquarters staff and the Dominican permanent representative to the OAS. The events received extensive local press coverage. End summary.

Model OAS

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12. Both Fernandez and Insulza addressed the opening of the Model OAS and attended a gala dinner for the 300-some university students from 9 countries, as well as Dominican authorities, foreign diplomats, and press. Fernandez delivered a strongly pro-democracy speech, but noted that democracies in the region are handicapped by poverty and inadequate access to public services and in some cases democratically elected governments have not finished their terms. He said full democracy does not exist where there is a lack of housing, employment, quality education, health care, and respect for human rights, including "guaranteed social rights, the right to culture, the right to recreation, and the right to enjoy the capacity to exercise mental creativity." He praised the role of the OAS in promoting democracy and human rights and specifically commended the work of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Human Rights Court, which guarantee individual rights against the power of the state. (This was an elegant touch, considering the controversy generated last year when the IAHRRC ruled against the Dominican government and required payment of damages to two Dominicans of Haitian descent who had for several years been denied identity documents by the national authorities.)

13. Insulza in his speech defined democracy as including not only fair elections, but also respect for human rights, citizens' access to justice, transparency of government procedures, and other elements set forth in the Inter-American Democratic Charter. He emphasized the mandate for the OAS and its member states to strengthen democratic institutions. It was noted that the Model OAS was the first of its kind to take place in the Dominican Republic and was organized in collaboration with Dominican civil society groups and educational authorities. The Model OAS held

sessions until March 9.

#### Forum on Political Reform

14. At the opening of the two-day Regional Forum, with an audience of Dominican and other legislators, political party leaders, and diplomats, Insulza delivered the keynote speech, "Political Reform in Central America and the Dominican Republic: Advances and Challenge." He said democracy requires parliaments, free and fair electoral institutions, competitive political parties, and independent branches of government. He advocated institutional reforms beyond the electoral stability that many Latin American countries have achieved: legislative reform, social equity, public financing of election campaigns, representation of citizens' interests rather than money-wielding lobbyists, and "juridical security." The goal of the reforms should be "the recovery of citizens' confidence in democracy." He particularly commended the Dominican Republic's National Dialogue, led by Catholic University rector Mons. Agripino Nunez Collado, which for years has conducted working groups of politicians and civil society on several of these topics.

15. At the same event, Dominican House of Representatives speaker Alfredo Pacheco denounced the selfishness of elites in the region, special influences on political parties, clientelism and paternalism in elections, and a disregard of political leaders for social inequalities. He called for adaptation of democratic institutions to change these realities, equal access to government services, the rule of law, and better living conditions for the majority. Dominican Senate president Andres Bautista sounded similar themes and said that for the public to have greater confidence in political parties, they would have to do a

better job of representing citizens' interests.

#### Haiti

16. In the press conference, Insulza focused on Haiti. He called for international donors to show "greater flexibility" on conditions for loans or grants to Haitian reconstruction and said democratization will not move forward without prompt assistance to improve economic and social conditions. Insulza said that the first test of the international community's long-term commitment will be the renewal of MINUSTAH's mandate. According to one press item, in response to a question he replied that he would favor the transfer of prisoners from Guantanamo to another location. However, he reportedly noted that the OAS has never been involved in the situation in Guantanamo because it is a bilateral issue.

#### OAS Functions and Priorities

17. A panel discussion on the present and future of the OAS dealt with the organization's priorities; programs on human rights, electoral observation, and promotion of democracy and good governance; and the Permanent Council. Participants included OAS headquarters officials Irene Klinger, Elizabeth Spehar, and Steven Griner; OAS resident representative Bertha Santoscoy; and Dominican permanent representative Roberto Alvarez.

18. Insulza and Fernandez reportedly discussed logistics for the scheduled June 3-6 OAS General Assembly in Santo Domingo and related topics (reftel).

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